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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes five case studies and identifies the common conditions that enabled these colleges to benefit from Federal resources. Twenty-five conditions common to all five colleges with respect to their handling of Federal programs are described. Additional factors present at the individual schools studied are also noted. Some of the major problems that must be dealt with when receiving Federal aid include: (1) lateness of Federal appropriations announcements which makes planning difficult; (2) grants made for a 12-month period, necessitating initiation, implementation, and completion of projects within the time period; (3) announcement of availability of funds is sometimes given on short notice, leaving little time to submit proposals; (4) once a proposal is submitted, turn-around time until grant awards are finalized can be as long as six months; (5) many Federal agencies' staffs are not familiar with community colleges; (6) high turnover rate in Federal offices makes it difficult to establish on-going relationships with Federal program officers; and (7) difficulty in matching institutional practices with Federal fiscal and regulatory practices. The future role of Federal money in the colleges studied is speculated upon. (Author/AH)

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RESOURCE PAPER NO. 3

FEDERAL RELATIONS IN COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES

Preliminary Results of a Study
Conducted By

Jack Orcutt
Executive Director
The Junior and Community College Institute

Colleges Studied:

Central YMCA Community College, Chicago, Illinois
Coast Community College District, Costa Mesa, California
Florida Junior College at Jacksonville, Jacksonville, Florida
Lees Junior College, Jacksonville, Kentucky
Santa Fe Community College, Gainesville, Florida

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FEDERAL RELATIONS IN COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES

by

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Executive Director
The Junior and Community College Institute

In this paper the summaries of the five case studies will be synthesized and the commonality of conditions that have caused these colleges to benefit satisfactorily from Federal resources will be identified. This paper will also include a summary of problem areas and the future role of the Federal Government as perceived by those interviewed.

The following twenty-five conditions were determined to be present at all five institutions which were visited by the author.

1. The colleges' personnel involved with Federal relations understand and accept the institutions' philosophy, goals and priorities.

2. There is an understanding at the colleges of the intent and priorities of Federal legislation. There is also an awareness that these priorities change and the colleges are prepared to move with these changes. The colleges realize also that they must compete agressively for Federal funds. The aggressive stance at each of these institutions takes varying forms because of the different nature of the schools and of the individuals involved in Federal relations.

3. There is an awareness at these colleges that Federal resources can support both new and on-going programs. The colleges realize that it is the basic purpose of the Federal Government to help them achieve institutional progress. At all of these colleges Federal projects have caused institutional change.

4. The colleges search for Federal resources to support institutional priorities. The colleges realize that as far as possible they should only become involved with Federal projects which eventually will be supported by institutional resources.

5. The colleges' chief administrative officers and the boards of trustees are committed to support the Federal relations program. The Federal relations officers keep the chief administrative officers informed of Federal program development.

6. An effective Federal relations program is an integral component of on-going institutional development. This includes institutional planning evaluation and research. For example, at Santa Fe Community College they are planning two or three years ahead in developing Federal proposals.

7. The colleges are committed to provide institutional resources to aid in the support of Federal projects.

8. The enthusiasm of the colleges' staffs for the purposes of these institutions creates a positive atmosphere for the development of viable Federal projects.

9. The colleges' programs both Federally supported and otherwise, are a direct result of efforts to meet the needs of the communities these colleges serve.

10. The colleges realize that it takes time to develop an effective Federal relations program. The staff at Santa Fe Community College indicated that it will take one and one-half years to see the results of establishing a viable Federal relations program.

11. The colleges are careful to implement Federal grants according to their approved purpose and procedures. This develops credibility and a good track record in the eyes of Federal program personnel. Effective implementation of Federal projects requires a positive working relationship between a college's business office, the Federal relations office and individual project directors.

12. The colleges have established and supported adequately staffed offices to assume responsibility for Federal relations. These offices are provided with necessary resources, such as travel and telephone monies, to fulfill their function.

13. The colleges have carefully chosen their Federal relations officers. These individuals are able to communicate effectively with people, and are given the leeway to act quickly if necessary. These Federal relations officers have, for the most part, learned their skills through on-the-job training. However, three of the institutions, Coast, Florida Junior College and Santa Fe, have been able to have their Federal relations personnel benefit from participation in the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges' Federal Specialists Training Program. The Federal relations officers at these colleges are all extremely dedicated to their work.

14. At these colleges, the Federal relations officers are closely involved with the total operation of the institutions.

15. The Federal relations officers are skilled at working with the communities which these institutions serve. This enhances community involvement in the development and implementation of Federal projects. It is probably helpful if a Federal relations officer has had some type of community experience before he or she assumes such a role.

16. The Federal relations officers at these colleges make every effort to keep faculty and staff informed about the potentials for the development of Federal projects. They take the time to work with those who may have a good idea which can be developed into a viable Federal proposal. Proposal development is a team effort involving all those who have something to offer to a proposed project involved in its development from the beginning.

17. The Federal relations officers realize that they need to know the needs and abilities of the faculties at these colleges. Personnel at Florida Junior College pointed out that this is difficult in a large multi-campus district.

18. Given the commitment of the chief administrative officers and the boards of trustees to support a Federal

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relations program, the ability of the institutions to benefit satisfactorily from Federal resources appears to be a direct result of the efforts of the Federal relations officers.

19. The Federal relations officers at these colleges are knowledgeable enough about the particulars of various Federal programs so that they do not waste their time developing proposals which would have little chance of support. They also realize that in some cases two different Federal programs might offer support in similar areas. This awareness enhances the institution's potential to attract Federal resources.

20. These colleges are aware that it is important to have a Federal programs library that is as complete and well organized as possible. In order to make effective use of this library, the Federal relations officers find that they must read continually to keep on top of new developments.

21. The colleges have developed a thorough institutional profile which provides the background information needed to give an accurate picture of their institutions not only to the Federal Government but to other interested parties.

22. The colleges' personnel involved with Federal relations realize that it is important to get to know and interact with Federal officials in order to better understand the intent and priorities of Federal programs. All of the colleges have received technical assistance from Federal programs personnel in developing specific proposals.

23. Those who develop Federal proposals realize that it is important to read Federal program guidelines and application forms carefully. Proposals should then be written to fit these guidelines.

24. The Federal relations officers at these colleges all agree that a good proposal should be clear and explain what you plan to do step by step. At Central YMCA, it was noted that this process is not as easy to implement as it might appear. At Santa Fe the Federal relations officer spelled out what he believed to be the components of a good proposal. They are: (1) Identify need; (2) Explain purpose; (3) Develop sound methodology; (4) Build in an evaluation component; and (5) Develop a budget that accurately reflects what you propose to do.

25. The Federal relations officers at these colleges are aware that there are many different forces which may cause a Federal proposal to be initiated. An idea may come from faculty, from Federal program materials, from interaction with Federal personnel, from the community, from the board of trustees, etc. These colleges also follow-up on Federal proposals, once they are submitted, to make sure that the Federal Government is aware of the seriousness of effort that went into developing these proposals.

The following conditions which contributed to an institution's ability to benefit satisfactorily from Federal resources were found to be present in some but not all of the five colleges visited. Many of these conditions are a result of local situations or of patterns of historical development. Also, the lack of evidence that a particular condition exists at an institution may result from the fact that such information did not come out in the interviews conducted by the author.

At Santa Fe and Central YMCA, the colleges' involvement in the Federal student financial aid programs led to the establishment of a broad-based Federal relations program. At Lees, the school's involvement in a program supported by Title III of the Higher Education Act had the same result.

Each of the five colleges, at one time or another, has been involved in Federal projects to support staff development. At three of the institutions, Coast, Florida Junior College and Santa Fe, those personnel responsible for Federal relations are also responsible for staff development. In each of these cases the institutions have considerable non-Federal funds available to support staff development. Indeed, at the two Florida schools the availability of operating resources for staff development is a state mandate.

As will be shown later, when the problems identified by these institutions are enumerated, the Federal Government does create some frustrations for colleges. Although it is apparent that personnel at all five institutions visited realize this, three of the schools (Coast, Florida Junior College and Santa Fe) pointed out specifically that you need to learn to live with frustrations created by the Federal Government if you wish to have an effective Federal relations program. Relative to this, personnel at Coast and Florida Junior College indicated that you must struggle continually to overcome the problems which the Federal Government may have created for you. This struggle can be undertaken through such means as national organizations, personal efforts, or support of an interaction with internal Federal operations such as the United States Office of Education's Community College Unit.

The remaining conditions identified at the colleges visited appeared at only one, or in some cases two, schools and for the most part can be directly attributed to the particular nature of each institution. For example, the Federal relations function varied as to how it fit in the organizational structure of the colleges. At Santa Fe, Harvey Sharron, as Dean of Development, reported directly to the president and was considered part of the office of the president. At Jacksonville, Steve Wise, as Director of Special Projects, related in the same manner to his institution's organizational structure. Tome Noe at Lees reports to the Dean of the College who is responsible for all internal affairs at the school. In these three cases the Federal relations officer functions as a staff officer. At Coast the Federal relations function is part of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Educational Development and at Central YMCA is the responsibility of the Vice President for Community Development. Both these positions are line functions reporting directly to the chief administrative officer. Although functioning differently in the organizational patterns of different schools we see that, except for Lees, the Federal relations officer reports directly to the chief administrative officer. At Lees, the organizational pattern is new and the small size and informal administrative structure of the College makes the Federal relations function just as strong in the College hierarchy as in the other institutions.

Although the Federal relations officers at these institutions have a great deal of freedom to act, only at Santa Fe does the Federal relations officer have the delegated authority to act for the institution.

At Central YMCA, the College's goals and priorities have been molded by their parent and founding organization the

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YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago. The College functions with a great deal of autonomy, but there is no doubt that its mandate to serve the needs of inner city Chicago came originally from the YMCA.

Although not necessarily absent at the other schools, there were three conditions that personnel at Florida Junior College identified as benefiting them in attracting Federal resources. They were: (1) they believe that most Federal programs focusing on undergraduate education are consistent with the College's goals and priorities; (2) they are willing to go beyond institutional and Federal priorities to support an individual who has a good idea which might provide change, and; (3) they believe in pairing creative and implementing people. These conditions at Florida Junior College can be attributed, I believe, to the College's open-ended approach to Federal relations.

PROBLEMS AND THE FUTURE

The chief administrative officers and the Federal relations officers at the five institutions visited were asked to identify problems they had with the Federal Government, and what they believed to be the future role of the Federal Government in the development of their institutions. What follows is a summary of the highlights of the responses to these questions.

The major problems identified were:

1. Lateness of Federal appropriations and grant announcements, which make sound institutional planning difficult. Frequently grant awards were announced in the late spring or early summer for programs that were to begin the same summer.

2. Too often Federal grants were made for only a twelve month period. A project would have to be initiated, implemented and completed in this time period. This situation, coupled with late grant announcements, frequently caused severe strain to be imposed on institutional personnel.

3. On some occasions the announcements that funds were available under certain Federal programs came on such short notice that colleges had very little time to submit proposals. This time period has been as short as a week to ten days. There have even been situations where institutions received application materials after the date that proposals were due.

4. Once proposals are submitted to the Federal Government there is sometimes inordinate turn-around time until grant awards are finalized. In some cases this has been as long as six months or more. Circumstances such as this sometimes can kill an idea that was hot at one time and has lost its vitality six months later.

5. Many Federal agencies' staffs are not familiar with community and junior colleges. In these agencies, those from the field that are asked to review proposals and make funding recommendations are frequently not familiar with two-year institutions. These agencies also tend to turn to these same people for advice in making policy decisions. This lack of understanding of community and junior colleges has often led them to be passed over when funding decisions are made.

6. The turnover in personnel in many Federal agencies and their regional offices often makes it difficult to establish on-going working relationships with Federal program officers. When, all of a sudden, new personnel are administering a program, they not only have to learn anew about your institution, but frequently they need to learn the operation of the program itself.

7. With some Federal programs it is very difficult to develop working relations with Federal agency personnel, regardless of turnover. This makes understanding the Federal program and its priorities difficult. To rely exclusively on Federal application forms and other explanatory material does not always give a complete picture of the situation.

8. The two private colleges visited, Central YMCA Community College and Lees Junior College were confronted with the problem of being unable to attract resources through Federal programs administered by state agencies. In Illinois and Kentucky, Federal monies appropriated under such programs as Adult Basic Education, Vocational Education and Manpower Training were allocated to institutions and agencies other than private two-year colleges.

9. Two or three of the institutions visited identified internal problems with things such as matching Federal fiscal and regulatory practice with their own, and effectively educating faculty about the broad potential of Federal programs.

As for the perspective of those interviewed concerning the future role of the Federal Government in the development of their institutions, the responses, as one would expect, were related to the anticipated future needs of the particular colleges. All of the colleges hoped there would continue to be a relationship between their priorities and the Federal Government's priorities. The diversity of the curricula at most of the colleges made them feel that as long as the Federal Government was going to provide assistance for higher education, they would be able to benefit from Federal resources. Central YMCA and Lees were hopeful that there would be a continued emphasis on supporting low income students in the inner city and Appalachia. Several colleges hoped that "seed" or "venture" money would continue to be available so that they might try new and innovative programs which their own resources could not support. Some concern was expressed for the retreat of the Federal Government from some categorical programs. On the other hand, encouragement was expressed about the potential of the new Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education.

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